

## BUILDING BRIDGES TO AFROCENTRISM: A LETTER TO MY EGYPTOLOGICAL COLLEAGUES

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### PART TWO OF A TWO-PART ARTICLE

2. THE CONTENTION THAT THE EGYPTIANS WERE THE GREATEST CIVILIZATION IN HISTORY. Contrary to the expectation of most Afrocentrists, most Egyptologists are less bothered by the contention that the Egyptians were black than by the exaggerated claims made about the achievements of Egyptian civilization. These claims, including attribution to the Egyptians of great mathematical, scientific, and philosophical sophistication, are often based on misinterpretations or exaggerations of the evidence, and in some cases pure fantasy and wishful thinking. Many of the arguments advanced show a complete ignorance of (or disregard for) the facts of chronology, for example, the contention that the Greeks "stole" their philosophy from the library at Alexandria and then burned it down to cover their theft, or the claim that the architecture of Greek peripteral temples was borrowed from

the eastern mamisi at Dendera.

Paradoxically, while it is in the details of this contention that Egyptologists find the most grounds for outrage and dismissal of the entire movement, this is also the area where we can do the most to help Afrocentrists move towards a more rigorous and respectable scholarship. In principle, few Egyptologists would deny that ancient Egypt was a great civilization, and that the ancient Egyptians achieved wonderful things and made unique contributions to history and global culture. It in no way detracts from these contributions that they had terrible difficulties adding fractions because of a ludicrously clumsy system of notation, or that they did not understand the importance of the brain, or that they may have borrowed the idea of writing from Sumerian civilization. On these points the Afrocentrists need to develop a better appreciation of where the strengths of Egyptian civilization really were. Most Afrocentrists do not want to be in the position of teaching their children things that aren't true. However, because of the political desire to find great Egyptian achievements in areas that the West values, and because of the limited material available to them and their limited familiarity with the culture, they often misinterpret the evidence and seize upon unsubstantiated ideas that fit their agenda.

The way we can help here is not, however, to argue against these misunderstandings and mistaken ideas individually. There are too many of them, and the arguments tend to be both unpleasantly adversarial and futile.

"See, this is a model of an ancient Egyptian glider-plane."

"Actually, it's a Late Period model of a bird. If the Egyptians could fly gliders at that period, don't you think Greek and Egyptian sources would have mentioned it?"

"But it's aerodynamically perfect!"

"Well, of course it is; it's a bird."

"But it's different from all the other bird models. Besides, what do you know about aerodynamics?"

This sort of argument gets us nowhere. The only strategy that is effective is more fundamental. We must

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

## CONTENTS

BUILDING BRIDGES TO AFROCENTRISM by Ann Macy Roth	1
SPOTLIGHT / LETTERS	2
DEVELOPMENT NEWS	3
NEWS FROM CAIRO	4
NEWS FROM NEW YORK	5
EXHIBITION NEWS	6
BOOK REVIEW	7
LACMA/ARCE EXHIBIT	8

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Inventaire B .. 10.4.95.....

10-01-1995



## BRUCE LUDWIG

The "American Discovery of Ancient Egypt" opened in Los Angeles on November 5, 1995. This major exhibition represents an unusual collaborative effort among the major American museums with Egyptian collections, ARCE, and American Egyptologists. It is the most important exhibition of Egyptian art to travel the country since the Amenhotep III exhibition of several years ago. It received strong financial backing from the Robinson Mays Companies, the Gily Foundation, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as well as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. But the idea of the exhibition was conceived by one of ARCE's Board of Governors, Bruce Ludwig, during the annual meeting of the Governors in May 1990.

At that meeting, Bruce, who is with TCW, a major real estate firm in Los Angeles and New York, mentioned that if they wished, Board members sitting in the room could organize a fabulous exhibition of Egyptian art that would not only benefit their institutions and bring public attention to their excavations in Egypt, but would also help dramatize the work of the American Research Center in Egypt, then at the beginning of a development campaign to raise its profile and public awareness.

Bruce was already a long-time friend of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and a great friend of the then director, Earl "Rusty" Powell, III. He encouraged Terry Walz, executive director, to approach the museum to see if it would be interested in co-organizing the exhibition with



BRUCE LUDWIG

ARCE. Once they expressed interest, Bruce provided the seed money that allowed Nancy Thomas, the curator of ancient art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Gerry Scott, III, the newly installed director of ancient art at the San Antonio Museum of Art, time and travel funds

to develop the idea. The Ludwig grant underwrote the cost of meetings in New York and Philadelphia, during which curators from all the museums with great Egyptian collections met and discussed the projected exhibition. Thanks to his assistance, "The American Discovery of Ancient Egypt" further crystallized and took shape.

Bruce has been a great friend of Egypt. He has backed the work of Kent Weeks in the Valley of the Kings for many years as well as the work of Mark Lehner at the Pyramids and Daniel Polz of UCLA on the West Bank. He is also a Trustee of the American University in Cairo and organized the 75th anniversary celebrations of the university that took place earlier in the year. Bruce became a Board member of ARCE in 1986. *Terry Walz*

## A SPECIAL LETTER

Dear To Whom This May Concern,

My name is Alexis Clements, I am 13 and want to become a Egyptologist and earn my Doctors Degree in Archeology. I was wondering if you could send me anything you have on Egypt. I have taught myself hieroglyphics and I have read every book at the school and public library. I have two 8 hour tapes of nothing but egyptian shows that were on The Learning Channel. I keep trying to con my grandparents to take me to Cairo, Egypt.

They say Cairo, Iowa.

So if you could send as much as possible. I will be very grateful. If there is anything you have't to buy please send a notice. I'm only 13 so I can't afford much.



Sincerely, Alexis Clements

## THE GERALD L. VINCENT LOUNGE

The lounge used by visiting Fellows and others has recently been named in honor of Gerald L. Vincent, a Board member of ARCE for the last seven years, who has generously contributed time and expert advice to the Center. Jerry makes frequent trips to the Middle East and always seems to have the time to stop in at the Cairo office to see what's going on. The lounge has been created in the Cairo Center to provide space for Fellows to read mail, meet friends and colleagues, and borrow novels and other books from the Center's small "lending library."

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS:  
NEW BENEFITS

Since the new annual appeal went out in late August, the following members have joined at the "Life Membership" level: Sandra Reynolds; Catherine Roehrig; Alan May and Demetria Newman.

Under new terms of Life Membership recently voted by the Executive Committee, a part of the

Life Membership payment will be earmarked to purchase a chair in the new Cairo Center facility, and a special plaque that identifies the Life Member, will be placed on the back of the chair. Members who have already made Life Membership contributions will also be honored with a "chair" at the Cairo Center.

If you are interested in becoming a Life member, please call the New York office for details. The cost is \$1,500.

## WINTER LECTURES

BUILDING AN OBELISK

Mark Lehner

A preview of the new *Nova* television program.

Jan 21, 1996, 7:30 pm. Scarsdale Public Library.

PHARAOHS AND KINGS IN BIBLICAL EGYPT: BEHIND THE TELEVISION SERIES.

Robert Bianchi

A preview of his new television series. Jan. 31, 1996, 6:00 pm.

Room 300, Main Building, Washington Square East, NYU.

WHEN GIVING  
IS GETTING

Life income gifts are a win-win opportunity for members interested in supporting ARCE and its goals. A charitable remainder trust allows you to donate principal while providing you with a lifetime income and many tax benefits.

In addition to realizing significant financial gains, you will have the pleasure of giving, knowing that ARCE will be able to continue its worthwhile endeavors because of your generosity.

Why not consider setting up a charitable trust naming ARCE as beneficiary? Call Elaine Schapker at (212) 529-6661 for more information.

## LIFE MEMBERS

(as of November 1, 1995)

William Y. Adams  
Lois A. Aroian  
Sid R. Bass  
Garry Bohm  
Linda Sue Butler  
I. L. Cohen  
Virginia V. Condon  
Brian J. Davis  
Mark M. Easton  
Lawrence Eicher  
Jerome Eisenberg  
Wallace J. Eldredge  
Florence Friedman  
Emma Swan Hall  
W. Benson Harer  
Pamela K. Harer  
Charles Herzer  
David R. Hinkle  
Thomas Judson  
Jean Keith-Bennett  
Donald R. Kunz  
Victoria La Sala  
James M. Lehrer  
Bruce Ludwig  
A. Bruce Mainwaring  
Eugene I. Majerowicz  
Lizbeth Malkmus  
Alan M. May  
William Brice McDonald  
Sheila McNally  
Barbara G. Mertz  
Grier Merwin  
Norma and Olan Mills  
William Needle  
Demetria A. Newman  
Dorinda J. Oliver  
Peter Puraty  
George Howard Railsback  
Sandra Hagan Reynolds  
John G. Roth  
Anne H. Salisbury  
Adina L. Savin  
William Kelly Simpson  
Gerald L. Vincent  
Hedy Voigt  
Christiana Walford  
Robert L. Wilson  
Joan Brown Winter  
Catharine H. Wright



## AND A LITTLE MORE ABOUT OUR LIBRARY STAFF. . .



Head librarian, **Hammam F. Hasan**, has been with ARCE since 1990. He is married to a grade school teacher and has three children. After

eight years as a librarian in the manuscript department of the Egyptian national library. Hammam and his family moved to Mecca where they spent the next twelve years. He was in charge of 25,000 original manuscripts from all over the world at Umm al-Quara, a research center for post-graduate students. Hammam also worked with Islamicist Charles Butterworth as a research assistant during the preparation of the Averroes series published by ARCE.



Happily helping Hammam with the non-Arabic collection, acquisitions and any other necessary tasks is **Meredith Sarris**, full-

time volunteer. Pfizer, Inc., where her husband is regional manager, is the reason for their overseas posting, which has included Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines over the past 25 years. Meredith has a BA in political science from Bradley University and worked as a market research sales analyst for Abbott Laboratories for five years prior to going overseas. Much of her volunteer work was done in the Bangkok and Jakarta Museums. It was during

the eleven years in the Philippines that she developed the library skills necessary for her current contribution to our Cairo library.

Last, but not least, **Sualiman Goma'a**, as the library assistant takes care of all photocopying, cleaning and miscellaneous tasks. He is married with two children. Sualiman always presents a cheerful face at the reception area.



## POTTERY IN CAIRO

BY FRAN VINCENT  
CAIRO RESIDENT

Pottery is abundant all over Cairo in both utilitarian and craft forms. Visitors to Cairo exploring the Khan El-Khalily or the Coptic environs will observe in the shops and stalls small folkloric pottery figurines depicting every day life scenes and fables. The wonderful facial expressions, all individualistic and compelling, make delightful gifts and souvenirs and, if chosen well, will be memorable in any living room. Throughout the city, as one travels along the streets, pottery in every shape and form is either displayed for sale or is being utilized in one way or another. Fellucas laden with earthenware slowly and timelessly make their way up and down the Nile. Giant zillas or water jars are set along the streets, a block of wood placed over their mouths and, equipped with cups, are used by travelers to quench their thirst. Pottery is an ancient craft easily substantiated

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

PAULA SANDERS

The Islamicist-in-Residence for 1995-96 is Paula Sanders, Associate Professor of History at Rice University. Prof. Sanders specializes in Fatimid history and is the author of *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (SUNY, 1994).

Her project for this fellowship year is "Claiming the Past: The Medieval and Modern Invention of Fatimid History." This project investigates how the Fatimid past has been appropriated and reinterpreted in a number of different cultural and political contexts, from medieval to modern times. A significant portion of the larger project deals with Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk interpretations of Fatimid history. Sanders will work in her fellowship year on the section of the project focusing on modern appropriations of the past. This part of the project analyzes European, Egyptian, and modern Ismaili claims to Fatimid history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Originally, the section on modern appropriations was to deal primarily with Ismaili restorations of Fatimid monuments and Egyptian curricular and scholarly materials on Fatimid history. Since arriving in Cairo at the beginning of September and becoming familiar with the activities of the Egyptian Antiquities Project, Sanders has expanded her research plan to include a comprehensive discussion of the underlying historiographical assumptions of nineteenth and twentieth century conservation and restoration efforts.

## MESA MEETING: HOW TO WRITE A GRANT FOR EGYPT

In conjunction with the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, ARCE convened a special workshop on how to write grants to work in Egypt. The seminar was sponsored by the Council of American Overseas Research Centers and the Social Science Research Council in addition to ARCE.

## GRANT NEWS

The National Endowment for the Humanities has extended our Senior Fellowships Grant for another year, to 1996-97, at the level of \$60,000. This will allow ARCE to support the research of at least two senior fellows in Egypt. This comes at a time when the Endowment has been under attack from the US Congress, and about one-third of the staff has been released due to budget decreases.

The United States Information Agency has renewed its support of the ARCE Fellowship and other Exchange Programs for the 1995-96 year, at the level of \$150,000. The grant supports five fellowships, an exchange of a museum specialist, and the Conservator in Residence Program, and a special workshop, "Islam, Secularism and Popular Culture in Egypt," to be held at Columbia University in March 1996.

The Samuel H. Kress Foundation has renewed its support of the Samuel H. Kress Fellowship in Egyptian Art and Architecture for the 1995-96 year, at the level of \$13,000. The recipient this year is Bethany J. Walker of the University of Toronto, who will be studying the origins of Cypriot and Mamluk Sgraffito.

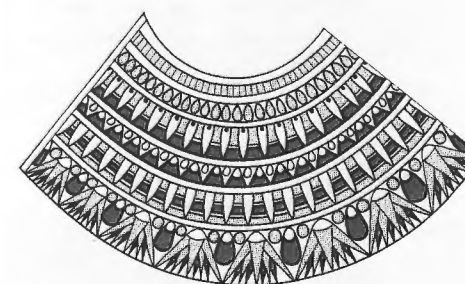
## THE ARCE HISTORY

Kay Pfeiffer spent two months (September and October) in Egypt continuing research on the history of ARCE under a special grant from the United States Information Agency. She has consulted both archival materials there (as well as at the Smithsonian Institution, where the US records are kept) and has talked to a number of older members of ARCE. A shortened version of the "history" should appear in a future issue of the *Newsletter*.

## THE PHARAOH'S JEWELRY AND THE ARCE MUSEUM SPECIALIST IN CAIRO

Thanks to a grant from the United States Information Agency, ARCE selected William Ward, the emeritus director of design at the Cleveland Museum of Art, to assist the Egyptian Museum in Cairo in redesigning its famous collection of ancient jewelry (excluding the King Tutankhamun collection). Bill had been responsible for the brilliant design of the Amenhotep III exhibition in Cleveland, and jumped at the opportunity to work in Egypt and on this fabulous collection.

Bill Ward spent three weeks in Cairo in September and October and returned again in November, working with Dr. Mohamed Saleh, Director of the Museum, and his staff. His design



for the jewelry was accepted, and funds to construct the new display cases were awarded to the museum by the Egyptian Antiquities Project under a special award given to the Friends of the Fulbright Commission. New lighting and air conditioning are also being installed. Visitors to Cairo will be able to see the new display soon.

## NEW YORK PUBLIC PROGRAMS

The "first ever" theatre benefit for ARCE took place on October 19 in New York City, with a preview of "Victor/Victoria" starring Julie Andrews. Fun was had by all, and Julie, who hasn't appeared on Broadway in thirty years, made it a spectacular personal triumph. This was a near sell-out crowd, and thanks to the support that ARCE received from members in the New York City metropolitan region, about \$1,000 in contributions was raised.

The first Guest Lecture in the New York region brought Donald Redford to town. He gave a fascinating report on the latest field season at Mendes by the team from the University of Toronto. In late October, Diana Craig Patch, Field School Director, reported at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University on the inaugural season of the "ARCE Field School Project," which this year worked at a site at Memphis.

## NEW PERSONNEL AND VOLUNTEERS AT THE NEW YORK OFFICE

Elaine Schapker has joined the part-time staff to work as a program and administrative assistant. She will also be working as the liaison person for the Egyptian Antiquities Project.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)

## AN EGYPTIAN BESTIARY AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

BY EDNA R. RUSSMAN,  
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE,  
THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

The small temporary-exhibitions gallery tucked into the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Egyptian wing has become an important new venue for exhibitions of Egyptian art. Three outstanding shows have already been mounted there by Dorothea Arnold, curator in charge of the Department of Egyptian Art, and her staff: the elegant Pharaoh's Gifts: Egyptian Stone Vessels from Ancient Egypt, the glitteringly exotic Gold of Meroe and, most recently, An Egyptian Bestiary, which closed on October 15th. This lively and engaging show, drawn entirely from the Metropolitan's own collection, brought together a hundred or more objects representing almost every animal depicted by the ancient Egyptians, from hippopotami to mosquitoes. Most of the images were small or even minute in scale, and almost all were gems of the carver's, painter's, or modeler's art. Their richness and variety reflected the abundance of animal life in ancient Egypt and vividly evoked the Egyptians' multifaceted response to the natural world.

The animals were grouped according to their natural habitats: the Egyptian Desert; Wetlands and Waterways; the Alluvial Land. This

organization had the advantage of associating species that were often represented together in Egyptian reliefs and paintings, and it also circumvented the problem of classifying certain beasts as wild or domesticated. As Dr. Arnold has noted in the publication written for the exhibition, modern distinctions between wild and tame were less clear-cut in ancient Egypt.

All animals seem to have had some kind of religious or magical significance for the ancient Egyptians. The



Recumbent Lion Cub (MMA 66.99.2) Early Dynastic Period (ca. 3100-2700 B.C.) Quartz. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

complex, often difficult subject of symbolic meanings was the focus of the texts on the labels and in the exhibition publication; given the brevity of these entries, the emphasis on symbolism occasionally necessitated the omission of more mundane information. Such cases, however, were few. More important, and much more unusual, was the sense of intellectual adventure in the many texts ending with an idea or suggestion, frequently posed as a question. How often does one see question marks on museum labels!

The exhibition included examples

of animal-headed gods and other composite beings, but no sphinx. This omission was unfortunate, because the important symbolism of the lion in relation to kingship was sparsely represented. The animal's negative aspect was illustrated by the ostrakon drawing "Pharaoh Spears a Lion" (MMA 26.7.1453), but there was no image of its role as royal protector, and for a representation of the lion as the king himself, only the Early Dynastic quartz statue of a "Recumbent Lion" (MMA 66.99.2), which was described as a cub and hypothesized to represent the king as the son of the goddess Hathor. This identification, however, is very uncertain. It is true that the disproportionately large head of the Metropolitan lion gives it the look of an immature animal, but this impression may well be illusory. The statue belongs to a group of Early Dynastic theriomorphic figures, including a hippopotamus in Copenhagen, a baboon and an open-

mouthed lion in Berlin. These other examples are recognizably adult, but all have similarly oversized heads. There is reason to think that this exaggeration was symbolic of divinity, in which case the Metropolitan lion is best understood as the representation of a deity in the form of an adult animal. Its lack of a mane (and the closed mouth?) suggest that it is a lioness—possibly our earliest representation of Hathor herself.

To accompany the exhibition, Dr. Arnold has written a short publication, originally issued as *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 52/4 (Spring, 1995), and now available separately, as *An Egyptian*

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

## THE MAMUR ZAPT AND THE SPOILS OF EGYPT

BY MICHAEL PEARCE  
MYSTERIOUS PRESS/WARNER BOOKS.  
NEW YORK 186 PP. \$19.95

BY SUSAN J. ALLEN  
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE  
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Archaeologists and students of the ancient world love a mystery. George Andrew Reisner, the father of Egyptian archaeology in America, was one such fan and left his sizable mystery library to Harvard. And mystery writers have found the settings of the ancient and modern Middle East and its archaeological and historical problems inherently mysterious; its archaeologists, anthropologists and other scholars, natural born detectives. From Sax Rohmer to Agatha Christie, from Elizabeth Peters to Linda Robinson, Egypt has provided settings and characters for mystery novels.

A somewhat interesting twist has now been added by Michael Pearce in his series *The Mamur Zapt and the ....* Instead of the scholar-detective, he draws on the tradition of the police procedural. His detective, Capt. Gareth Owen, is the Mamur Zapt, the head of the political branch of the CID of the British colonial administration at the beginning of the present century. He is a suitably romantic figure—bachelor, linguist, opera lover, and a Welshman (and therefore outsider in the British ruling class). His job is to investigate political conspiracies and crimes at a time when nationalism is on the rise in Egypt, the British protectorate is trying to

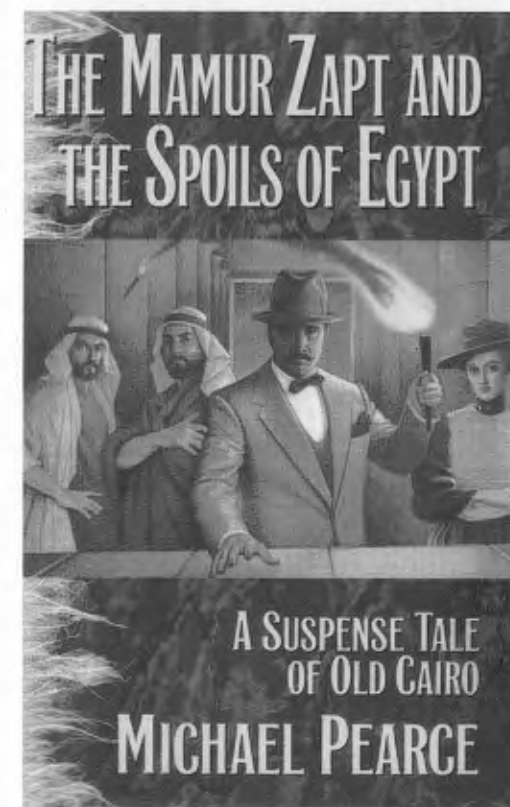
impose its administration on a bureaucracy as old as the pyramids, and entrepreneurs and the oligarchy of pashas are making their fortunes. Each mystery ultimately involves him with all strata of society from the pashas to the man in the street. While Pearce and his main character are clearly sympathetic to Egyptians, his viewpoint is from the British side. He says that Capt. Owen is adept at colloquial Egyptian Arabic, but the examples spoken in the book are decidedly "khawaga".

The joy of any mystery involves a good plot, characters, and also a sense of place—something that this reviewer is especially partial to and especially as that place is Cairo in the romantic and more leisurely past. It is fun to take out an old Baedeker and plot the moves around the city.

The author is well informed about life in Cairo circa 1900-1910 and its political situation, and even draws on

known historical figures in creating his characters. *The Mamur Zapt and the Spoils of Egypt* is the sixth in the series and many of the characters—Zeinab, the pasha's daughter and Owen's romantic interest, Mahmoud, the very capable and nationalist inspector from the Parquet or civilian police, and Owen's own staff, Nikos and Georgiades, have now become regulars. It is the first, however, to deal with Egyptian archaeology and that trusty source of crime and intrigue—the antiquities trade.

Following the pattern of the earlier mysteries, it takes some time to discover what exactly the "crime" or "mystery" is, and we follow along with the Mamur as he pieces together the events and people presented to him to reveal the underlying plot. Most of the action, therefore, comes in the later part of the book. In *...the Spoils of Egypt*, the Mamur becomes involved with a politically well connected, but troublesome American spinster who is interested in the despoliation of the archaeological heritage of Egypt by the system of permits and concessions granted to excavators as well as the illicit trade in antiquities. Someone tries to push her under a tram in Ataba. Was it an accident? If deliberate, what was the motive? This leads inevitably to intrigue on an excavation in Deir el Bahari and mummies, suspicious accidents, falling into tombs, and kidnapping. No one is who they seem, the antiquities both genuine and forgeries, and the prize sought is unlikely to ever have existed. The motive, as in the author's earlier books, is money. As events lead one way and another, up and down the Nile, your interest is stimulated and held, until all the pieces finally fall into place and the details explained. ♀





## REBUILDING A PTOLEMAIC PERIOD GATEWAY FROM THE TOP DOWN

BY DIANA WOLFE LARKIN  
CONSULTANT TO THE MUSEUM  
OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON FOR THE  
COPTOS GATEWAY PROJECT;  
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE,  
MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE  
MUSEUM OF ART

One of the most impressive works to greet visitors to "The American Discovery of Ancient Egypt" traveling exhibition of 1995-96 will be an ancient Egyptian temple gateway of the Ptolemaic Period. This gateway, from Coptos in Upper Egypt, has been the focus of a major conservation project at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, during the past year. Teams of experts have come together to clean and consolidate the ancient sandstone blocks, to restore the architectural form, and to devise an efficient system for taking the thirteen-ton gateway apart and reassembling it at each of the show's three venues. An anonymous donor to the "Discovery" exhibition has made the conservation effort possible. The exhibition, jointly organized by ARCE and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, focuses on North American contributions to the field of Egyptology. The show will be on view in Los Angeles until January 27, 1996, and will then travel to St. Louis and Indianapolis.

The newly reconstructed gateway dates to the 2nd century B.C. reign of Ptolemy VIII (Euergetes II). Dows Dunham of the Museum of Fine Arts excavated the gateway blocks in 1923 near the great temple of Min and Isis

at Coptos. In its original position, the gateway likely served as an entrance to the enclosure wall of a small subsidiary temple. The blocks were found reused as fill in a later structure, possibly part of a late Roman fortification. After excavation, Egypt's Department of Antiquities assigned the blocks to Boston.

Only recently was it recognized that the Ptolemaic blocks once came from a single gateway. From the late 1920s until this year, they were installed at the Museum of Fine Arts in two units, as elements of a gateway and of a separate section of temple wall. In the new display the former "wall" unit has been attached behind the previously identified gateway elements, supplying the rear portion of one jamb. The impetus for the new reconstruction came from my own proposal for a revised configuration. As a scholar familiar with Egyptian temple decoration, I knew the reliefs on both sets of blocks to be typical for temple gateways. Measurements and specific decorative features suggested a single gateway. An archival photograph showing the full shape of a block that was partially obscured from view in the old installation provided the missing link between the two parts of the display.

An urgent need for conservation made it especially fortuitous when exhibition planners found a donor to fund work on the gateway. Photos showed that cracks had appeared in



The temple gateway from Coptos (MFA 24.1632-33) during its reinstallation, showing the steel armature for the ancient sandstone blocks. Museum visitors will see no steel, but rather a reconstructed gateway composed of surviving stones and adjoining plywood substitutes for missing element. Photo courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

certain blocks since 1923. The heavy weight above was thought to have encouraged fracture in lower blocks that already had pressure points on their bottom surfaces from previous damage.

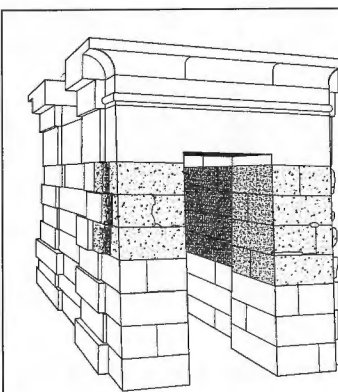
Rita Freed, Curator of the Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian, and Near Eastern Art at the MFA, set the project in motion. The twenty-four surviving blocks constitute about one-third of the gateway's original stonework. These come from the upper part of the jambs. Dr. Freed felt a full reconstruction was

merited to help visitors understand the architectural context of the surviving gateway elements. Arthur Beale, Director of the Department of Objects Conservation and Scientific Research at the MFA, masterfully coordinated the hands-on aspects of the work.

First came drawings. I was asked to reconstruct the complete gateway on paper. My plans and elevations went to architect John Williamson, who used a computer-assisted design program to create blueprints and a perspective view. MFA conservators, in consultation with engineer Craig Barnes of CBI Associates, planned the mechanics of reinstallation. A collapsible steel armature was built and the blocks suspended from it on threaded

steel rods one-half inch in diameter. These run through vertical holes drilled in the stone. The weight is held by two-inch movable steel disks positioned along the rods. The beauty of the system is that no block rests on any other, and that subtle adjustments in alignment can be made as needed in the installation process. When installed, the blocks appear to rest on each other.

While design details were being worked out, conservators Nina Vinogradskaya and Carol Snow painstakingly cleaned, treated, and repaired the fragile blocks, a months-long process that brought out the fine quality of the reliefs and uncovered considerable original paint in red, blue, and gold pigments. Once the steel armature was built, it was time for the gravity-defying stunt of putting the blocks in place from the top down. The uppermost surviving jamb blocks were threaded onto the



Reconstruction of gateway from Coptos. Drawing by Diana Wolfe Larkin and John Williamson.

steel rods and eased upwards into position, with the two-inch disks supporting the weight. Then the course of masonry belonging beneath that was installed, and so on, until behind-the-scenes viewers had the odd experience of observing 24 heavy sandstone blocks hanging in air. For me the biggest excitement was in seeing the gateway's front and rear portions joined for the first time since antiquity. Although I had been

confident of my theories for arranging the blocks, I was enormously pleased—and relieved—when theory turned tangible.

After the ancient blocks were in place, plywood panels were installed to screen the armature and complete the restoration. Using plywood textured to imitate stone, a team from Skylight Studios in Woburn, Mass., skillfully created lintel and cornice pieces and supplemented existing jamb elements. Extra parts in both steel and wood were constructed to adapt the traveling gateway for insufficient ceiling heights in Los Angeles and Indianapolis. Only in St. Louis will the gateway be displayed in an atrium where it can be assembled to its full 17½ foot height. The newly configured reliefs are stunning in their adaptable setting.

The project could not have been completed without the work of numerous people. A key player was Assistant Conservator Jean-Louis Lachevre. Among many on the MFA staff who assisted were Karen Gausch, Will Jeffers, and Rachel Kemper, along with Egyptologists Timothy Kendall, Peter Lacovara, and Joyce Haynes. Claude Traunecker, visiting from France, provided helpful advice.

## NEWS FROM CAIRO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE FOUR

by the huge quantities of beautifully made scarabs and earthenware vases found in Pharonic tombs. Later in the early years of Islam the ceramics, with their distinctive metallic glaze and inscriptive, floral, and animal motifs, were very much admired by early travellers. Examples of both periods can be seen in the Cairo and Islamic Museums. The craft still continues throughout Egypt on primitive wheels using the same materials as in the past. Today potters cater to the economic environment of the twentieth century and the demand for utilitarian vessels. The farmers and working class people use pottery vessels for drinking, eating, cooking and storing. The pottery style may differ from potter to potter and from area to area rather like village dialects, but the usage is the same. Most of the clay comes from the clay rich soil in Upper Egypt and is mixed and prepared by the individual workshops in Cairo. The old Islamic workshops were in Fustat, nicknamed 'the city of pottery'. Today the area just north of the Coptic area, is still a very interesting place to explore and find potters and the mostly utilitarian vessels they make. The degree of craftsmanship and quality is no longer the same as in the past, although one can be surprised and find something wonderful with the traditional Islamic motifs depicted, such as a cockerel evoking the dawn prayer, a horse as a person's best friend, a camel that will not let you man down, or a hoopoe significant as the prophet Suliman's messenger. The potters are generally welcoming, delighting in having an audience view their craft.

The small folkloric figurines that one sees today are recent in Cairo. I have been unable to determine where and when they first originated. There is a museum in Kharga, in the



Western Desert, with a charming display of wonderfully sculptured clay characters that is rumored to have existed in the 1940s. There is also a village 28 kilometers down river from Luxor called Garagos. There, in 1955 two Jesuit priests, Father Etienne Mongolfiera and Father Achermann, inspired by the success of Ramses Wissa, who had established a weaving center in the Harraniya district of Cairo, established a center for potters. The simple creches and little statuettes of farming and village characters portraying charming vignettes of every day life were produced in the late 1950s, and were very popular in their annual exhibits in the College of Jesuit Fathers in Cairo. Equally popular were the very traditional Garagos dome-topped soup tureens, platters and small bowls, with their distinctive blue glazes and free flowing designs of fish, cockerels, doves and scorpions. Yet there seems to be no connection between the production of the clay figurines in Garagos or Kharga and

the future thriving business in Cairo. The business was started by Samir el Guindi in 1975 and his workshop continues today, known by most as "The Mud Factory". Samir el Guindi is considered a ceramicist, his workshop is constantly abuzz with artisans creating charming pottery figures of village life, some in a natural clay state others delicately colored. There are hand-some bowls and original tea sets, decorator base lamps, cut out candle holders and creches. This workshop supplies many of the shops throughout Cairo today, and will take orders. It is well worth a visit and you are likely to be given an enlightening tour.

In the Harraniya area of Cairo on the Sakkara road and overlooked by the Pyramids of Giza, there are exciting workshops and galleries to visit. One gallery belongs to Nabil Darwish, who trained in Egypt and believes that his forms should reflect all things Egyptian. He is very successful in many different aspects of mixing clay and glaze inside the body of a pot to

produce droplets of color. He grows his own herbs for the dyes and prepares his own clay, to produce exquisite black and white, and black on black jars and, red and yellow glazed plates. The gallery of Mohie el Din Hussein, a ceramic artist famous for his glazes, concentrates on ancient Egyptian, Coptic and Islamic art styles. Susanne Wissa Wassef and Antoinette Henein have workshops that should be seen.

New workshops, artists and outlets appear and disappear, and you may well find a new store during your explorations around the town. I have tried to give a cross section of what variety does exist, but it is far from complete. The workshops are family concerns where there may be only one artist, so the quality may vary even within a store. Exhibits are advertised in the *Al Ahram Weekly* and in the *Egypt Today* monthly magazine. Cairo is always full of surprises, making it an exciting city to explore time and time again. 🐾

lively, and not at all subtle. It seems to have little in common with the carefully observed, meticulously executed sketch of the rodent. For this and other reasons, the question of the ostrakon's satirical intent should remain open; but in the publication, it is stated as a fact.

The next exhibition is Egyptian "Textiles of Late Antiquity" (December 14, 1995, through March, 1996). It offers a rare opportunity to see decorated fabrics and garments of Egypt's Late Antique (or "Coptic") Period, from the Metropolitan's almost legendary collection. A major Amarna exhibit follows (Fall 1996-early 1997) featuring loans of important objects from European and American museums and coinciding with the opening of a new installation of the Metropolitan's own collection of Amarna art. 🐾

that for "Pharaoh's Hunting Dog" (MMA 40.2.1), have benefited from being slightly expanded. In one instance, however, the revision was not an improvement. The label for an ostrakon drawing of a "Rat or Spiny Mouse" (MMA 31.4.2) suggested that the whiskery little creature was drawn by the same hand that penned two profiles of the great official Senenmut on the other side. This point was not made in the publication, perhaps because Senenmut's features were, unfortunately, not reproduced. The label concluded by asking "Is this one of history's earliest political caricatures?" The question is intriguing. An obscene graffito near Queen Hatsheput's tomb shows that some of Senenmut's contemporaries did take a satirical view of his high standing with the queen. The graffito, though, is a typical Egyptian caricature: bold,

## EXHIBITION NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX

*Bestiary*. This is not quite a catalogue of the show, for it includes only eighty-three of the exhibited pieces; but in every other respect it is a welcome complement, which belongs in the library of anyone interested in animals or any aspect of ancient Egyptian life or beliefs. The author's introduction is a veritable tour de force: in just four pages, she has managed to encapsulate a judiciously balanced survey of the many roles of animals in ancient Egypt. Three chapters follow, each devoted to one of the habitats, and each comprising a brief general discussion, followed by photographs of selected objects and short entries based on the labels. Some entries incorporate minor revisions from the labels; a few, such as

## NEWS FROM NEW YORK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE FIVE

Bob White, who worked many years as an executive with the International Institute of Education and earlier for Aramco before he retired five years ago, has been working in the New York office as a volunteer grant writer. Recently he completed an assignment working on a grant for the Department of Education, and is currently developing grant applications in other areas. The ARCE office relies on volunteer help, and if members in the New York area have the interest and time to work on special projects, please give Catherine Clyne a call.

### FIND AT PHAROS

PAUL STANWICK  
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE  
INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS, N.Y.U.

French archaeologists rescued a piece of Graeco-Roman statuary from over 1,500 years underwater on Wednesday at the climax of a year of exploration off the site of the ancient Pharos Lighthouse.

After three hours wrestling with a high swell and swinging cables, divers maneuvered the red granite torso of a young woman onto the hook of a crane, which then deposited it at the feet of Culture Minister Farouk Hosni.

A crowd of hundreds cheered from the quayside. "It's the breast of a female, very beautiful," said Hosni.

The archaeologists plan to save another 30 pieces from the seabed, including what they say are two granite blocks from the Pharos itself, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

"Before we had only some representations of the Pharos in mosaics, paintings and on glass. Now we have pieces of the lighthouse itself," said Jean-Yves Empereur, the French head of the Mission Archeologique Sous-

Marine.

The other pieces chosen for retrieval include statues of sphinxes, bases and capitals of columns, sections of obelisks, inscribed blocks and a statue of the goddess Isis.

### TRAVELERS IN EGYPT

BY CAROLINE WILLIAMS  
ADJUNCT LECTURER  
COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

From July 16-19, 1995, The Oriental Museum at the University of Durham hosted the Conference, "Travelers in Egypt." For all present it was a "smashing success." The initial idea was simple and small: a round table discussion based on "who knew what about whom" but, like Topsey who "just grewed," the focus expanded to include broader perceptions of the "Self" and the "Other." The result was 15 sessions in which thirty-four papers representing 9 different nations and nationalities were made. Subjects included: Travelers: Early, Egyptologists, Anthropologists, Women; Architectural, Artistic and Photographic Impressions; Literary interactions: European and Egyptians; and a special panel on E.W. Lane.

Concurrent with the three day sessions were three handsome exhibitions at the Oriental Museum: Thomas Cook in Egypt, a visual history of company and country from first voyage in 1869 to current cruises; Early Travel Books on Egypt, from Petro della Valle, via Denon, Belzoni, Lane to Edwards; and Palestine: the Symbolic Environment in Poetry and Dress. These exhibits continue at the Museum.

An appropriate finale to the Conference was the excursion to Alnwick Castle, ancestral home of Algernon Percy, third Duke of Northumberland, who as Lord Prudhoe was among the early travelers to Egypt, and an early collector of Pharaonic artifacts. In 1950 his collec-

tion was purchased by the Oriental Museum and became the nucleus of their own fine display of Egyptian antiquities. Lord Prudhoe was also the patron of Edward Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon, a work which to this day has not been superseded. Lord Prudhoe's collection of manuscripts, as well as his own diaries and sketches) are on view by appointment.

Plans to publish the Conference papers are in progress, and with the observation of strict and tight deadlines, *in shah allah*, the volume will be available by July 1996. Furthermore, it is hoped that the exploratory, informative, descriptive, emphasis of this conference can be continued in a forthcoming conference, desirably in a continental city, perhaps in two years.

For those who participated, for those who wanted to but who could not, and for those who are interested in travelers to the Nile, a database—listing name, address, travel interests—is being created at the Oriental Museum. Anybody desiring further knowledge or to be included, should contact:

Mrs. Janet Starkey  
The Oriental Museum  
University of Durham  
Elvet Hill, Durham DH1 3TH  
Fax (0191) 374 3242  
Tel (0191) 374 7911 🐾

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### FACULTY POSITIONS

Assistant Professor of Egyptology in the Oriental Institute and the Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. Appointment begins 7/1/96. Applicants must have background in Egyptology with special interest in first 3 millennia of Egyptian history and research in, Egyptian literature, religion, or social and economic history. Applications should include a CV and 3 or more academic references and should be submitted to:

Egyptology Search Committee  
Oriental Inst.  
1155 E. 58 St., Chicago, IL. 60637  
Application deadline: 12/15/95





familiarize students with the evidence and the way one argues from it. Students who have read translations of ancient Egyptian literature and other texts and discussed how social and cultural deductions can be drawn from primary sources will generally not stand for assertions about ancient Egypt that are blatantly contradicted in these texts. Likewise students who have read about the forms of pyramids and the theories about their construction, or who have become familiar with Egyptian tomb iconography, will not believe claims that do not correspond to the evidence they have seen. (There will, of course, be ideologues who will hold on to their groundless convictions in the teeth of the evidence, but most of them will have dropped the class after the initial discussion of the race of the ancient Egyptians.) Teaching students a more source-based, critical approach not only will improve their ability to evaluate the contentions of Afrocentric Egyptology, but should help them deal with other subjects as well, and lays the foundation for academic and other work that will give them pride in their own achievements as well as their heritage. Moreover, an explicitly source-based approach has the added advantage of forcing us to reexamine our own basic assumptions.

When Afrocentrists base their conclusions on the evidence, the results can serve their purposes without violating the sensibilities of scholars. The validity of the evidence also lends authority to the ideological position being argued. One example that goes some distance towards this goal is an Afrocentric poster given me by one of my students, designed and produced by a group called the Melanin Sisters, for grade-school children. The poster is decorated with hieroglyphs and urges the reader to adopt behavior in accordance with the

ancient Egyptian concept of Ma'at. As a guide to the requirements, the Negative Confession is quoted (albeit with some substitutions for the weird bits). Another student showed me a book called *Hip-Hop vs. Maat: A Psycho-Social Analysis of Values* (by Jawanza Kunjufu, Chicago: African American Images, 1993), which again uses the Negative Confession, as well as selections from Egyptian wisdom literature, to construct a system of morality that the author contrasts favorably with the street ethics prevalent among some young African-Americans. The use of actual Egyptian evidence in developing Afrocentric materials could be encouraged and made more authentic if Egyptologists took a less adversarial attitude toward its creators.

If we teach Afrocentric students to find evidence for their assertions and to construct convincing arguments, there will always be the possibility that they will use these tools to argue points that we find uncongenial to our pictures of Egyptian civilization. At a conference some years ago, I praised an innovative and provoking argument to a colleague, and his reply was, "Yes, I suppose it was interesting, but just imagine what they will do with it." To use such fears of exaggeration in the popular sphere (regardless of whether they are justified) as an excuse for suppressing arguments that contradict our own reconstruction of the past is unjustifiable and unscholarly. Political bias is unavoidable, so the current wisdom goes, and we all find it more difficult to accept some arguments than others, depending upon our own previous ideas or our feelings about the person making the argument. But such predispositions are something that we all deal with frequently, and should have learned to set aside. We are scholars, and we should not be afraid of the truth, whatever it turns out to be.



3. THE CONTENTION THAT EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION HAD EXTENSIVE INFLUENCE ON EUROPE AND AFRICA. This argument really has two parts, which are in some ways symmetrical, but which have two entirely different motivations. The argument for Egyptian influence in Europe is an extension of the argument for the overall superiority of Egypt to other cultures: by rooting Greek and Roman civilizations in Egypt, Africa can be seen as the source of the civilization we find most impressive: our own. The argument for the influence of Egypt on other African civilizations, in contrast, is intended to allow modern African-Americans (who are in most cases the descendants of people abducted from non-Egyptian parts of Africa) to claim the Egyptian cultural heritage as their own.

The half of this question that has been most discussed of late is the claim that Egypt colonized Greece, and that classical Greek culture is essentially Egyptian. Greece is traditionally viewed by Western culture as the source of beauty and reason, so (again, for political reasons) it is felt especially important to show that ancient Egypt was extremely influential in its development. *Black Athena*, Martin Bernal's work on the question, has been at the center of the recent debate on this claim, and has given it a degree of prominence and respectability in the non-Afrocentric scholarly community. Despite this, I feel strongly that Bernal's books do an ultimate disservice to the cause he is trying to advance. In the short term, of course, they have brought both the issue and Bernal himself to the forefront of public consciousness. However, his arguments are so chosen and presented that they cannot serve as a solid foundation for the academically credible Afrocentric Egyptology that he hopes to create.

In many cases, Bernal has either intentionally misled his readers by his selection of evidence or he has neglected to investigate the full context of the evidence on which he builds his arguments.

He routinely cites late Classical traditions that support his argument, and ignores the Egyptian evidence that doesn't. A good example of these problems is his discussion of the connections of Egypt with bull cults on Crete (vol. II, pp. 22-25, and more fully as Chapter IV, especially pp. 166-184). After an initial foray proposing dubious connections between Min, bulls, Pan, and the Minoan king Minos, Bernal connects Minos to Menes and the name of Memphis, Mn-nfr, because of their phonetic similarity and their connection with the bull cult of Apis. (Mn-nfr, of course, comes from the name of the mortuary temple of Pepi I and has nothing to do with Menes, who is called the founder of the Apis cult only by a late Roman writer.) The name of the Mnevis bull also contains the magic letters mn in the Classical sources. The fact that the name was consistently written Mr-wr by the Egyptians is not mentioned in the summary, while in the fuller argument it is dismissed as "confusion among the three biconsonantals mr, mn and nm" in words referring to cattle (possibly due to onomatopoeia). The fact remains that the Mnevis bull is only rarely called anything but Mr-wr. The "winding wall" sign in Mr-wr, which is also used in mrrt, "street," is connected in his summary with the labyrinth of the Minotaur.

The result of these arguments is a "triple parallel": the connection of a bull cult in both Egypt and Crete "with the name Mn, the founding pharaoh, and a winding wall." But in Egypt neither the name Mn nor the founding king was clearly connected to the Apis cult; and the connection of the "winding wall" sign with the Mnevis bull was probably purely phonetic. The triple parallel reduces to a single coincidence: the founding king of Egypt and the most famous king of the Minoans both had names with the consonants "Mn." This relationship, as Bernal points out, has been discussed by previous scholars. That both countries had bull cults, like

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### MOST EGYPTOLOGISTS WOULD LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO FIND INDISPUTABLE EVIDENCE THAT ALL WESTERN CULTURE DERIVED FROM EGYPT

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most other ancient Mediterranean cultures, is hardly worthy of remark. The following discussion of "the bull Montu" is even more tenuous, since Montu is generally characterized as a falcon, and is no more to be equated with the Buchis bull with which he shares a cult place than the sun god Re is to be equated with the Mnevis bull. That these arguments are flawed does not prove Bernal's conclusions wrong, of course; but such arguments can never prove him right, and in the meantime they obscure the debate.

The connections and contacts between Egypt and the Greek world have long been recognized, and Bernal misrepresents the degree to which modern scholars suppress evidence for them. Certainly the influence of Egyptian statuary on Archaic Greek kouroi is widely accepted, among Classicists as well as Egyptologists, although the differences in their function and execution are obviously of importance too. In arguing for an Egyptian colonization of Greece, however, Bernal and his followers disregard the extensive Egyptian textual tradition (surely if Thutmose III had conquered southern Europe and set up colonies there he would have mentioned it in his annals, for example), as well as the arguments of the scholars who have been investigating these questions for decades. Most of Bernal's arguments, interestingly, rest on the Greek textual tradition, which was of course a product of its culture's own cultural and political situation and requirements, and often made use of the Egyptians' antiquity and reputation for wisdom. By crediting the Greek evidence over the Egyptian,

European over the African, Bernal takes advantage of the fact that his Western audience is more familiar with (and more inclined to credit) the Classical tradition than the Egyptian. That few of the myriad reviews of the series have been written by Egyptologists is an obvious indication of the European provenience of his evidence.

If we are honest, most Egyptologists would admit that we would like nothing better than to find indisputable evidence that all Western culture derived from Egypt; such a discovery would make us far more important, more powerful, and wealthier than we are today. Because of this bias, we are justifiably cautious in making such claims.

The other half of this contention, that Egyptian civilization had a wide influence in the rest of Africa, is argued most prominently in the writings of Cheikh Anta Diop. Many turn-of-the-century scholars made such a claim, and they are widely and reverently quoted in the Afrocentric literature to support the more recent contentions. Interestingly, their motivation was essentially racist. The invention of the "Hamitic" racial group, defined as a population essentially "white" in skeletal features, but with the peculiar anomaly of dark skin, allowed some early Egyptologists to categorize the Egyptians and the Nubians as "white." Then, working on the racist assumption that "blacks" were incapable of higher civilization, they attributed anything that looked like civilization in the remainder of Africa to "ancient Egyptian colonization." While there is a rather pleasant poetic justice in the fact that the flawed conclusions resulting from these racist assumptions are currently being used to argue for the connection of all Africans and African culture with the glories of ancient Egypt, the evidence for these conclusions is hardly acceptable from a scholarly point of view. As with the European conquests and colonies hypothesized by Bernal, African conquests and colonies beyond Upper Nubia are unlikely because of the



silence of the Egyptian records, although other kinds of contact are not impossible.

These two contentions of Egyptian influence outside of Egypt are among the most difficult Afrocentric claims to deal with. Unlike the question of race, these are not subjective judgments, and yet like the question of race they are yes-no questions that lie at the heart of the Afrocentric hypothesis. In particular, to deny the claim that all Africans are descended culturally and genetically from the ancient Egyptians is seen as an attack on African-Americans' right to claim the ancient Egyptian heritage as their own. At the moment, these claims have neither been definitively proved nor disproved, so it is probably wisest to take an agnostic position regarding them. The nature and extent of Mediterranean connections with ancient Egypt are worthy of further study, and may offer scope to arguments more truly Afrocentric than those propounded by Bernal. In Africa, too, there clearly were connections of some kind with areas beyond Nubia, as we know from the depiction of trade goods; and the degree of contact with Western Africa through Libya and the Oases has not been exhaustively studied. All of these areas have been receiving more attention in recent years, and it may be that there was more contact between Egypt and the rest of Africa, or between Egypt and Europe, than our current interpretations allow. If there was, let those who would argue it argue from evidence rather than authority.

4. THERE HAS BEEN A SCHOLARLY CONSPIRACY AMONG EUROCENTRIC EGYPTOLOGISTS TO SUPPRESS EVIDENCE ABOUT THE BLACKNESS OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS, their greatness, and their influence on European and other African civilizations. This is probably the most offensive manifestation of Afrocentrism we encounter, implying as it does that Egyptologists as a group have routinely abandoned their scholar-

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## IN IT ORIGINS AND TO SOME EXTENT IN ITS CURRENT PREOCCUPATIONS, EGYPTOLOGY IS A EUROCENTRIC PROFESSION

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ly integrity, simply in order to further some racist agenda. (As an epigrapher, I find the charge that we have recarved the faces of Egyptians represented in tomb reliefs particularly ludicrous.) Its most frequent manifestation is the Napoleon-knocked-the-nose-off-the-Sphinx-so-no-one-would-know-it-was-black contention, a silly argument that demonstrates the movement's unattractive paranoia. For the evidence against this, incidentally, I refer the reader to a fascinating article by Ulrich Haarmann, "Regional Sentiment in Medieval Islamic Egypt," BSOAS 43 (1980) 55-66, which records that, according to Makrizi, Rashidi, and other medieval Arab authors, the face of the Sphinx was mutilated in 1378 A.D. (708 A.H.) by Mohammed Sa'im al-Dahr, whom Haarmann describes as "a fanatical sufi of the oldest and most highly respected sufi convent of Cairo."

Although some Afrocentrists may have found individual Egyptologists uncooperative, for reasons made clear above, we are hardly likely to deny the achievements of the Egyptians. In one sense, we are far more Afrocentric than the Afrocentrists, since we try, where possible, to study Egyptian civilization on its own terms, rather than comparing it to our own culture. Most of us have developed a great respect for the skills of the Egyptians: their abilities and sophistication as sculptors, writers, diplomats, theologians, painters, architects, potters, bureaucrats, builders, warriors, and traders will not be denied by those who have studied the results of their work. Even greater skill is apparent in the suitability of these achievements to the needs of the ancient culture as a whole,

and this suitability is better appreciated the better one understands the cultural context in which the achievement occurred. To yank a building or a statue or a poem from its indigenous cultural milieu in order to compare it with its Western counterparts is decidedly Eurocentric, especially when one uses the Western products as the standard against which the Egyptian are to be judged; and yet, for political reasons, this is the most common approach of the Afrocentrists.

In another sense, however, the contention that Egyptologists are Eurocentric has at its center a kernel of truth. Any Egyptologist who proposes to do something constructive about the Afrocentric movement must admit that, in its origins and to some extent in its current preoccupations, Egyptology is a Eurocentric profession. It was founded by European and American scholars whose primary interest was in confirming the Classical sources and in confirming and explicating the Old and New Testaments for the furtherance of Christianity. A look at the earliest Egypt Exploration Society publications illustrates the way that early scholars "sold" their work by connecting it to familiar Classical and (especially) Biblical names and places: *The Store City of Pithom and the Route of the Exodus* (1885), *Tanis* (1885), *Naukratis* (1886 and 1888), *The Shrine of Saft el Henneh and the Land of Goshen* (1887), *The City of Onias and the Mound of the Jew* (1890), and *Bubastis* (1890). Furthermore, the fact that the cultures to the north and east of Egypt provide texts that we can use to correct and augment the Egyptian evidence, while those to the south and west do not, provides a third reason for concentrating our research on foreign relations to the northeast. Insofar as Nubian cultures have been studied, they have until recently been seen as distorted and somewhat comical attempts to replicate their great neighbor to the north. Because of these circumstances (the Classical focus of Western culture,

Christianity, and the distribution of writing), *ÆLA10* as well as the often unconscious racism of early scholars which has affected the shape of our field, Egyptologists have too often ignored the rest of Africa.

This ignorance has not been complete. As a result of the birth of cultural anthropology around the turn of the century, there was a great interest in finding the origin of Egyptian traditions in those of "other primitive cultures," i.e., the societies of contemporary Africa, which were taken as models for what Egypt was like "before civilization." This rather weird perspective led to such anachronisms as the claim that the ancient Egyptian jubilee ceremony "derived" from the alleged eighteenth-century African practice of killing a king who became too old to rule effectively. Despite the nature of the underlying assumptions, this early work in anthropological comparisons contains many interesting ideas. (I have found the work of A. Blackman especially rich.) Such similarities between cultures, reviewed and reworked to accord with current scholarly standards, may help explicate some of the puzzling elements in Egyptian culture. It must be remembered, however, that similarity does not prove influence, or even contact. As the archaeology and cultural anthropology of Africa become better known, and as Egyptologists, Afrocentric and traditional, become more familiar with and sophisticated about African cultures, it may be that patterns of such similarities can be identified, categorized, and traced with sufficient scholarly rigor to show routes of contact. These are important questions, and represent an area where the Afrocentric perspective might make substantial contributions not just to the education and self-esteem of African-Americans but to the international scholarly field of Egyptology as well. Such discoveries would add immeasurably to the resources of the entire field of Egyptology, widening our horizons and broadening our under-

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## AFROCENTRIC SCHOLARS [CAN HELP] FOCUS ON QUESTIONS IT MIGHT NOT OCCUR TO TRADITIONAL EGYPTOLOGISTS TO ASK

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standing of Egyptian culture.

Afrocentric Egyptology, properly pursued, has the potential to achieve important political goals: improving the self-image of young African-Americans and enhancing their belief in their own potential for achievement, by combating the racist argument that no one from Africa or with a dark skin has ever achieved anything worthwhile. The less exaggerated and the more rooted in accepted scholarly argument its teachings are, the more authority the curriculum will have. As the movement grows more sophisticated and better grounded, and as mainstream Egyptologists grow commensurately more accepting of its perspectives, it will, I hope, be possible to do away with the defensiveness that so often characterizes Afrocentric teachings currently. Instead of learning a doctrine on faith, teachers of Afrocentrism should encourage students to investigate the primary evidence and refine our knowledge of Egypt and other African civilizations on their own, truly Afrocentric, terms. Teachers should not worry that students will find that ancient Egypt was not a great civilization after all—on the contrary, the deeper one goes into its cultural productions, the more one comes to appreciate the ingenuity of the Egyptians.

At the same time, Afrocentric scholars with traditional training can serve as a useful corrective to the European vantage point inherent in traditional Egyptology, by focussing on questions that it might not occur to traditional Egyptologists to ask. We all ought to

help train these scholars. The level of interest and enthusiasm about ancient Egyptian culture is amazingly high in the African-American community. When I first arrived at Howard University, I was stunned by the enthusiasm I met with, both from my own students and from students outside of my classes (not to mention the prevalence of Egyptian-themed clothing and jewelry). At Howard, Egyptology is not a peripheral field in which one might take an elective as a novelty or to add an exotic line to one's law school application—Egyptian culture is seen as a heritage to be proud of, and something worth learning more about. Whether or not one agrees with the premise that inspires this enthusiasm (and, as I've said, this is largely a matter of faith and definition), there is a real potential for the expansion of our field among these students. While some Afrocentric students will lose interest once they get past the political questions, others will remain fascinated by the culture. A few of these may go on to become Egyptologists, whether with an Afrocentric agenda or not. Others will enter other professions, enriched by an appreciation for a culture other than their own, but to which they feel some connection.

In a time when university administrators talk endlessly of bottom lines and judge the validity of scholarly fields by the number of students they attract, we cannot afford as a field to ignore such an audience for the material we want to teach. In view of the growing influence of Afrocentrism in the educational and larger community, we cannot afford to maintain our adversarial attitude towards it and to refuse to contribute to its better grounding in Egyptological evidence and research. Most importantly, as scholars and teachers, we cannot afford to ignore enthusiastic, talented students with new perspectives that have the potential to expand both our academic field and our understanding of ancient Egypt. ♀

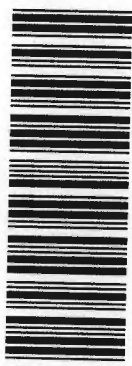




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## H O L D   T H E   D A T E

### EXHIBITS

#### LOS ANGELES

**AMERICA'S DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT EGYPT**  
American excavations in Egypt from 1900-70. More than 250 objects from about 4000 BC to AD 395. Nov. 5, 1995-Jan. 21, 1996, Los Angeles County Art Museum. (213)877-6111; The Saint Louis Art Museum, Feb. 29-May 27, 1996; The Indianapolis Museum of Art, July 13-Sept. 29, 1996.

#### NEW YORK

**TEXTILES OF LATE ANTIQUITY (4 - 7TH CEN. AD)**  
Textiles from the permanent collection, displayed for the first time. Special Exhibition Gallery of Egyptian Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Dec. 14, 1995-April 1996. (212)879-5500.

#### WASHINGTON, DC

**THE ANCIENT NUBIAN CITY OF KERMA**  
2500-1500 B.C.

The oldest African city outside Egypt to be excavated. National Museum of African Art, through 1998. (202)357-1300.

**RIVALRY AND POWER: ART OF THE BOOK OF THE 14TH CENTURY**

Calligraphic and manuscript traditions of Mongols and Mamluks. Sept. 24, 1995-May 27, 1996. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. (202)978-8100.

**VOYAGES AND VISIONS: 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN IMAGES OF THE MIDDLE EAST FROM THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM**  
82 Watercolors and drawings from the Searight Collection. Oct 11 1995-Jan 1 1996. S. Dillon Ripley Center, Smithsonian Institution (202) 357-2700

### FILM FESTIVAL

**ENGAGING CULTURE[S]: HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN DOCUMENTARIES OF THE NEAR EAST.**

Films by Near Eastern filmmakers. Titles from Algeria, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco. Feb. 8-9, 1996. Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, New York University, 50 Washington Square South, New York. (212)998-8877.

### SYMPOSIUM

**LAW AND ETHICS IN ANCIENT EGYPT**

The Charles and Elizabeth Holman Symposium on Ancient Egypt. Speakers: Emily Teeter, Frank Yurco, Richard Jasnow. McNally Amphitheater, Fordham University School of Law, New York. Mar. 15, 1996, 9 am-5 pm. (212)636-6390.

### LECTURES

#### BOSTON

**THE CHILD IN ANCIENT EGYPT**  
Erika Feucht, University of Heidelberg. Jan. 5, 1996, 7:30 p.m. Museum of Fine Arts. (617)369-3329.

**THE 1995 EXCAVATIONS AT SAQQARA**  
Rita Freed and Jean-Louis Lachèvre, MFA, Feb. 9, 7:30 pm, Museum of Fine Arts. (617) 369-3329

#### LOS ANGELES

**NUT—THE MOTHER OF HEAVEN**  
Anthony Spalinger, Dec. 13, 7 pm. UCLA  
**HERBERT WINLOCK'S EXCAVATION AT DEIR EL-BAHRI**  
Catherine Roehrig. Jan. 7, 1996, 1 pm. LACMA/ARCE/SC (213) 231-1104

**NOT AS THEY SEEM: CARVED AND RE-USED EGYPTIAN MONUMENTS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON**

Rita Freed, Jan. 15, 7 pm. UCLA. ARCE/SC (213) 231-1104

**THE FORMATION OF THE EGYPTIAN COLLECTION AT THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM**  
Donald Spanel, Jan. 21, 1 pm, LACMA. ARCE/SC. (213) 231-1104